

Strategies for Building a Robust Workforce Development System

Massachusetts must create a more coherent and flexible education and workforce development system that responds to identified business needs for well trained and educated employees, particularly in those sectors that are new to our economy. The system will simultaneously prepare a diverse population of potential employees for successful entry or redeployment into the labor market. These employees must receive high-quality educational and training opportunities that are prerequisites for a broad range of occupations across multiple industries.

Job creation is the key to Massachusetts' economic future, and the Patrick-Murray Administration is creating the workforce development system that will connect well-trained, highly-qualified employees to jobs in every economic sector and geographic region of the Commonwealth.

Greg Bialecki, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development; Joanne Goldstein, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development; and Paul Reville, Secretary of Education have jointly developed a strategic plan to implement new initiatives, maximize existing resources, and achieve the workforce development goals of the Patrick-Murray Administration in four key sectors— health care, life sciences, information technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

This strategic plan will achieve several goals:

- Increase the capacity of the community college system to create and sustain employee pipelines that are aligned with labor market demands in the four key sectors;
- Increase the responsiveness of the community college system to both employee and employer needs; and
- Strengthen partnerships between the community college system, the business community and all workforce development entities including Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), employers, and Career Centers across the state.

Short-term Strategies

- Initiate a public awareness and stakeholder engagement campaign to better leverage existing resources and capacity, maximize increasing levels of interest in workforce development, and secure financial and other types of support from key partners

Mid-term Strategies

- Increase the responsiveness of the community college system to employee, employer, and industry demands by:

- Creating new programs in high-need fields and regions of the state
 - Standardizing basic courses to make them interchangeable at all community colleges
 - Redesigning developmental courses
 - Bridging credit/not-for-credit courses and training programs
 - Developing a rolling calendar of start dates for different programs
 - Creating “stackable” credentials
 - Streamlining both the horizontal and vertical transfer of credits
 - Providing more comprehensive educational and career support to students
- Increase the alignment of courses and programs across high schools, vocational technical schools, community colleges, state universities, and University of Massachusetts campuses
 - Use online tools to provide students with clear descriptions of different pathways to multiple careers; create online environments for course development, course registration, and access to student services; and develop a catalog of educational, training, and certificate courses across key sectors
 - Increase the availability of experiential learning opportunities (such as internships and co-op placements) for high school and community college students by partnering with WIBs and employers in health care, life sciences, information technology, and advanced manufacturing
 - Identify enhanced measures for assessing the impact of community colleges on workforce development, and use these measures to promote continuous improvement
 - Refine partnership among education institutions, workforce development system and employers so that all parties are cooperating and that job creation is aligned to meet the job needs of employers and that the education and workforce development entities prepare individuals to fill those positions

Longer-term Strategies

- Establish regional technical expertise centers to share facilities and leverage high-cost capital equipment, technology, and laboratories for programs across multiple high schools, public institutions of higher education, and employers
- Create an online workforce development portal that would provide access to real-time data and create a single point of entry for employees and employers

Ongoing Work

- Increase the readiness of all high school students to successfully engage in postsecondary academic and career opportunities
- Reduce achievement gaps that disproportionately affect students of color, English language learners, and lower-income students
- Leverage the workforce development components of the Vision Project

- Strategically reallocate core funding to promote truly system-wide change
- Aggressively pursue state and federal grant opportunities to supplement state resources

Massachusetts will implement these new strategies to promote transformational and sustainable change at all levels of the workforce development system and create a robust workforce necessary to compete in the 21st century global economy.